



# SEX TRAFFICKING FACT SHEET



Sex trafficking is a form of modern-day slavery and occurs when a commercial sex act is induced by force, fraud, or coercion, or when the person forced to perform such an act is under the age of 18 years. Passage of the Trafficking Victims Protection Act of 2000 (TVPA) made sex trafficking a serious violation of Federal law.

As defined by the TVPA, the term 'commercial sex act' means any sex act, on account of which anything of value is given to or received by any person.

***Sex trafficking is tied with arms as the most profitable industry of organized crime after drugs. One of the fastest growing enterprises in the world, sex trafficking produces an estimated \$7 billion annually.***

## **Victims of Sex Trafficking and What they Face**

Victims of sex trafficking can be women or men, girls or boys, but the majority are women and underage girls. There are a number of common patterns for luring victims into situations of sex trafficking, including:

- A promise of a good job in another country
- A false marriage proposal turned into a bondage situation
- Being sold into the sex trade by parents for money
- Being kidnapped by traffickers

Sex trafficking frequently results in debt-bondage, meaning victims are held by their "employer" (pimps or traffickers) until they earn enough money to repay the expenses relating to their "acquisition."

Victims endure physical and psychological trauma and face numerous health risks. Some victims have unprotected sex with anywhere between 10 and 20 men per day, putting them at risk for HIV and other sexually transmitted diseases. If a woman becomes pregnant, she may be forced to have an abortion.

Victims also face the threat of having their family members tortured or murdered by traffickers.

## **Types of Sex Trafficking**

Victims of trafficking are forced into various forms of commercial sexual exploitation including prostitution and pornography, bride trafficking, military prostitution and sex tourism.

Victims trafficked into prostitution and pornography are usually involved in the most exploitive forms of commercial sex operations. Sex trafficking operations can be found in highly-visible venues such as street prostitution, as well as more underground systems such as closed-brothels that operate out of residential homes. Sex trafficking also takes place in a variety of public and private locations such as massage parlors, spas, strip clubs and other fronts for prostitution. Victims may start off dancing or stripping in clubs and are often coerced into more exploitative situations of prostitution and pornography.

**Trafficking Information and Referral Hotline 1.888.3737.888**



### **Assistance for Victims of Sex Trafficking**

When victims of trafficking are identified, the U.S. government can help them stabilize their immigration status, and obtain support and assistance in rebuilding their lives in the United States through various programs. By certifying victims of trafficking, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) enables trafficking victims who are non-U.S. citizens to receive Federally funded benefits and services to the same extent as a refugee. Victims of trafficking who are U.S. citizens do not need to be certified to receive benefits. As U.S. citizens, they may already be eligible for many benefits.

Through HHS, victims can access benefits and services including food, health care and employment assistance. Certified victims of trafficking can obtain access to services that provide English language instruction and skills training for job placement. Since many victims are reluctant to come forward for fear of being deported, one of HHS' most important roles is to connect victims with non-profit organizations prepared to assist them and address their specific needs. These organizations can provide counseling, case management and benefit coordination.

If you think you have come in contact with a victim of human trafficking, call the **Trafficking Information and Referral Hotline at 1.888.3737.888**. This hotline will help you determine if you have encountered victims of human trafficking, will identify local resources available in your community to help victims, and will help you coordinate with local social service organizations to help protect and serve victims so they can begin the process of restoring their lives. For more information on human trafficking visit **[www.acf.hhs.gov/trafficking](http://www.acf.hhs.gov/trafficking)**.